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From Kim to Christine Keeler

By RALPH MCGILL

Washington—All those who grew up on Kipling's Kim, Mahbub Ali, the horse trader, Creighton Sahib, and Hurree Babu—all sons of the charm—are incurably romantic about the British secret service. Hence, the fact that here in the national capital in the seats of the mighty and the less mighty, an uneasiness about London's security and intelligence makes for unhappiness.



McGill

But uneasiness remains. The admiration is under pressure from several sources to withhold classified information from the British until their security system has been overhauled.

Admittedly, the Macmillan government has been hard hit. Revelations of disloyalty and defection in the ranks of its intelligence services, plus the Profumo affair, have done lasting damage. Lack of coordina-

tion between the Prime Minister and those responsible for security, as revealed by the Profumo case, shocked the nation and dismayed Washington. Nor was this feeling relieved by the news that a secretary had been given previous notice that Christine Keeler, Profumo's friend, had also been seeing a Russian agent, and that nothing had been done about it.

British Organization

The British Security Service is known as MI-5. It is secret. Its chief is not known. The British some years ago decided it was helpful to the enemy to have the identity of anyone in intelligence publicized. It made it easier to follow him and, perhaps, pick up information by knowing where he went and whom he saw. (It is noticeable, incidentally, that since the retirement of Allen Dulles from the United States Central Intelligence Agency, the CIA has all but disappeared from the news pages — a fact most Americans approve.) Since MI-5 has no power to arrest, the British have a special arm of the service which works at counter-espionage and can detain suspicious or involved persons.

Hardest blows absorbed by the British agency have included the sensational 1951 case of Klaus Fuchs, a German-born scientist who admitted he had been passing atomic secrets to the Soviets for a period of years. Later there came the flight to Russia of the minor diplomats Donald MacLean and Guy Burgess; discovery that a George Blake was a double agent; that Bruno Pontecorvo, Italian-born scientist, had been subverted by the Russians, and that William Vassal, Admiralty clerk, in a classified department, for years had been blackmailed by the Russians into providing information.

Case of Philby

Latest, and not yet fully explained, is the case of H. A. R. Philby, former employee of the Foreign Office. He had not, it is said, been in classified work since 1951, when he was fired from the service because of a belief he had warned Burgess and MacLean they were suspected. This enabled them to escape to Russia.

Philby became a journalist in Lebanon. He disappeared last January from Beirut. The story has all the classic, cloak-and-dagger features. Mrs. Philby, all unsuspecting, reports that on the way to a diplomatic dinner party her husband left the taxi, promising her, he would join her at the dinner after he had sent a telegram to his newspaper. He did not. She reported his disappearance. Later she said a telegram came from Cairo in his name. Cairo said it had not been signed by Philby personally and that he was not in the country. Obviously, then, it had been sent by a fellow agent.

This record, with the probabilities of more to come, has shaken the service and brought it into disrepute. But, of course, it is a secret organization. And British intelligence in the past has been so superior that one hesitates to disclaim it now.

Old School Trick

During World War II it more than held its own in daring and in successful exploits. One which most appealed to the old school of Kim and Hurree Babu was that of taking the body of some unclaimed Britisher, dressing it in an officer's uniform, and putting into the pockets false maps and details of the allied landing plans. It worked, too. The Germans were truly confused.

The Russians would do well to think twice. It may turn out that Burgess and MacLean are, in fact, working for the British and that Christine Keeler was really extracting secrets from Yevgeni Ivanovich Romanov. Romanov can hold that line until the evidence is in. But

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